

Middlebury **SPORTS MAGAZINE**

Spring 2015

CONSTRUCTING VICTORY

PG. 9

A HISTORY OF FIELD HOUSES AT MIDDLEBURY

PETERSON FAMILY
ATHLETICS COMPLEX

**RECRUITING
PANTHERS**

PAGE 6

**VERMONT
ATHLETES**

PAGE 16



Editor-in-Chief

Fritz Parker '15

EDITORS

Emily Bustard '17.5

Joe Flaherty '15

Joe MacDonald '16

CONTRIBUTORS

Emily Bustard '17.5

Maggie Caputi '16

Joe Flaherty '15

Joe MacDonald '16

Fritz Parker '15

DESIGN

Olivia Allen '15

Michael O'Hara '17

The Middlebury Sports Magazine (USPS 556-060), the student sports magazine of Middlebury College, is published by The Middlebury Campus Publications. Editorial and business offices are located in Hepburn Hall Annex, Middlebury College. The Middlebury Sports Magazine is produced on Apple Macintosh computers using Adobe InDesign CS5 and is printed by Queen City Publishing in Burlington, Vermont. Mailing address: The Middlebury Campus, Drawer 30, Middlebury College, Middlebury Vt., 05753. Business phone: (802) 443-5737. Please address distribution concerns to the Business Director. First class postage paid at Middlebury, Vt., 05753.

WELCOME TO THE THIRD edition of *Middlebury Sports Magazine*. In this year's magazine you will find stories that delve into the less visible aspects of the athletic community on campus. Just as we originally envisioned two years ago, the magazine gives us – the sports editors of the *Campus* newspaper – an opportunity to dig beneath the box scores, to take a look at the personalities, traditions and histories that shape Panther athletics.

A magazine like this – like any work of journalism – can take many forms. Some may see it as an opportunity to magnify the many successes of Middlebury athletes, and to celebrate those successes. Others may see it as a medium for critical scrutiny of the athletic program and the culture that it fosters, implying that we as journalists have a responsibility to ask the tough questions that coaches and administrators do not want to hear.

As you flip through the pages of this year's edition, consider that we have taken a third approach. Rather than bringing any particular agenda to the magazine, we have done all we can to let the perspectives captured in these pages speak for themselves. Our job, as we see it, is simply to tell stories about sports.

AND WHAT A DELIGHTFUL job it is. In three years of putting together this magazine, the most difficult part of our jobs has been choosing from among so many worthwhile stories to tell. There is an enormous wealth of interesting, funny and challenging lore surrounding the Middlebury athletic program, and in three years of tapping into it we have hardly managed to make a dent.

Our challenge to you, our readers, is to help keep this lore alive. The more stories we tell about this place, the greater the sense of community that we will be able to build. In this edition of the magazine you will find five such stories. Each captures

a unique aspect of the history and culture of the College; the only commonality is that all five have to do with sports.

OF COURSE KEEPING the lore alive can also mean playing a part in the next great chapter of the history of Middlebury athletics, something that the current generation of Panthers has had little trouble doing.

In just its fifth month, 2015 has already been a historic year for the athletic program. From the selection of a national skier of the year to three All-Americans in the same NCAA women's mile race to four spring teams earning top-10 rankings, the

College's athletic teams have gone to greater heights in just the past few months than in entire years in the recent past. Add to that the opening of perhaps the most impressive athletic facility in Middlebury's history, and you will

see why we have had such difficulty picking from among so many worthwhile stories.

In the pages of the *Campus* each week, you find the specific details of these events and accomplishments. What *Middlebury Sports Magazine* aims to do is to go one level deeper, to tell the stories that lie just below the surface of the *Campus'* weekly coverage.

While the buzz of successful teams brings an unrivaled excitement to the college community, the fact remains that these superficial accomplishments are not why we play sports here. In 10 or 20 years, these achievements — so vitally important in the present — will be nothing but aging memories. At that point, what we will have left is our stories.

Fritz Parker '15
Editor-in-Chief

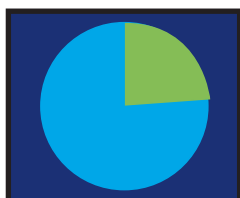
To our readers

IN THIS ISSUE



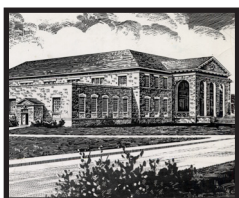
Krystina Reynolds '17 is Middlebury's only three-sport varsity athlete. Hear what that means to her and her coaches.

p. 4



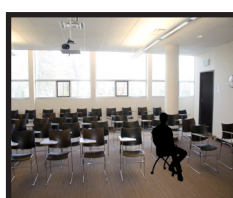
Where do Middlebury coaches find the high-school athletes that they recruit? *Middlebury Sports Magazine* dives into the data to find out.

p. 6



Explore the rich history of field houses at Middlebury — from the opening of Memorial in 1949 to Virtue in 2015.

p. 9



The time commitment to being a varsity athlete at the College is intense. How does that translate to dynamics in the classroom?

p. 13



As the standard of play in college sports rises, Vermonters are increasingly being locked out. In-state Middlebury athletes weigh in.

p. 16

Meet Krystina

While more and more athletes are specializing in a single sport a sophomore is bucking the trend. Meet Krystina Reynolds, Middlebury

When Krystina Reynolds '17 began looking at colleges during her sophomore year of high school at Hamden Hall Country Day School, she was unsure whether or not she wanted to play her main sport, soccer, at the collegiate level. Four years later, as a sophomore at Middlebury, Reynolds is not only a member of the women's soccer team, but the women's basketball and lacrosse teams as well. A side from the roughly forty runners

who commit themselves to cross-country in the fall and track during the winter and spring, Reynolds is the College's only three-sport athlete.

Reynolds arrived at Middlebury during August before her freshman year to participate in preseason with the women's soccer team, and her season did not conclude until early December. The women's soccer team had an incredibly successful 2013 season — Reynolds' first in the program — reaching the NCAA Tournament in San Antonio only to fall to Trinity University in the national semifinals. The Panthers finished their season with an impressive record of 17-3-2. As a first-year forward and midfielder, Reynolds saw the field in five games and contributed two goals.

Almost as soon as Reynolds' soccer season ended, informal lacrosse practices began.

"J-term was the first time I was done with soccer, and there were captain's practices for lacrosse and I didn't know if I was going to go or not," said Reynolds.

Reynolds spoke with head lacrosse coach Missy Foote sparingly before arriving at Middlebury, and although Foote encouraged Reynolds to try lacrosse, Reynolds was convinced that she would play only soccer. However, following advice from her parents, Reynolds went to the first day of captain's practice to give lacrosse a try.

"I went and liked it, so I decided to play," she said.

Reynolds experienced another successful season, as the lacrosse team reached the third round of the NCAA tournament, falling there to Gettysburg as they concluded their season with a 12-6 record. Although debilitated

by a concussion for much of the spring, Reynolds played in four

games as a midfielder, picking up one ground ball and causing two turnovers.

More than those statistical contributions, though, was the unrivaled nature of her experience: having finished just one semester of college, Reynolds had already been a member of two NCAA-qualifying teams.

Reynolds returned to Middlebury as a sophomore with these two banner seasons of collegiate athletics under her belt, and it immediately showed as she returned to the soccer pitch during her sophomore fall.

As a sophomore, Reynolds played in 15 games, starting four and scoring two goals. While the team was not able to replicate its NCAA trip from a year before, Reynolds established herself as a key contributor in the program. It was only at this point that the true value of her well-rounded athleticism had begun to show.

"Krystina is an exceptional athlete," said women's soccer coach Peter Kim. "Her successes on the field have come largely from her natural athletic ability. There have been a few times when she has brought a competitive fire that has been game-changing for us."

While many would have felt overwhelmed by the prospect of returning for the spring season, Reynolds could not wait even that long. Instead she took up a third sport, jumping almost immediately into early-season practices for the Panther basketball team. She knew the team had a small roster and decided to try out.

"When I wasn't playing basketball last year, I really missed it," she said. "That's a big reason why I decided to play this year."

So — with a break of only one week to address a lingering concussion — Reynolds took to the basketball court. There her presence was felt immediately. A thousand-point scorer in high school, Reynolds proved herself to be unaffected by her yearlong hiatus from the sport: she played in 17 games for an average of nearly 18 minutes and was sixth on the roster with 4.6 points per game.

"She was a great spark for our team



na Reynolds

at an early age, one Middlebury
ry's only three-sport athlete.

profile by Maggie Caputi
photo by Rachel Frank

this season," said women's basketball coach KJ Krasco. "Her speed and athletic ability really helped us on the court during some key NES-CAC games. In our wins versus Hamilton and Wesleyan, two games that stand out to me, Krystina was a key contributor and really contributed both offensively and defensively."

Since basketball season wrapped up in late February, Reynolds has been in the midst of a successful spring back on the lacrosse field. There, says Middlebury head coach Missy Foote, her go-getter attitude has had a positive impact on the team.

"I saw Krystina gain a lot of confidence between last year and this year, and I think that comes from playing two other sports," Foote said. "What I like about Krystina is that she's calm and she's not easily fazed by much, and as a defender that's really important, because you have to sort order out of chaos."

Foote notes that many of Reynolds' best attributes on the lacrosse field are those that she has cultivated in other athletic venues.

"I think that's where her basketball and soccer experience transfer so nicely," Foote said, "because soccer's a field sport, and then you take all the things she's gotten from basketball — how to be a defender in a small space — and then transfer that to lacrosse, where then you need the field vision that you have in soccer. It makes her the perfect combination of basketball and soccer to be a good lacrosse player."

Foote is in her 38th and final year on the Middlebury athletic staff and has witnessed firsthand the progression of women's athletics. She remembers "lots of women" participating in three sports up until the late nineties, but notes that there have been few three-sport athletes in the past decade.

Athletic Director Erin Quinn has observed a similar trend across the genders, as college athletics become increasingly a part of the "era of year-round specialization," with most athletes committing early to developing in only one — or, at most, two — sports. That Reynolds is able to compete at the collegiate level in three distinct sports is remarkable to Quinn.

"The possibility of a three-sport athlete in this era is even less likely than earlier eras both because of the time commitment required at this level, but even more so because so few youth athletes are participating in multiple sports, so there

are not many who would enter Middlebury with three sports as an option," said Quinn.

Kim echoed Quinn, suggesting that Reynolds' success in academics makes her accomplishments in athletics all the more significant.

"It's rare that someone had the time when they were growing up to cultivate a passion for three sports, plus their studies, so it's not surprising that we're not seeing as many three-sport players."

As an Economics major and a Math minor, Reynolds manages a heavy workload during the year. She also undertakes significant commitments beyond academics and athletics, as a part-time lifeguard, an economics grader and an active member of the Economics Society.

While many Middlebury athletes liken the time commitment of being in-season for their sport to that of a fifth class, Reynolds has found a way to do all of the above. Whether she's practicing, competing, watching game film or in the training room, she commits fully to the requirements of all three of her sports.

"It's four and half or five hours of your day," she said. "After practice, I go straight from dinner to the library every day, and I'm always up until the library closes because I don't have any time during the day to do my work, but I'm used to that because I've been doing that my whole life."

"Middlebury athletes commit tremendous time and energy to their sports, mainly because that's the type of people they are," said Kim. "They commit themselves to everything they're passionate about — school, sports, music, service, etc. The academic rigor of the college, coupled with the high caliber of NESCAC competition, means that student-athletes need to be experts at managing their time and their energy to excel on both fronts."

Despite the time commitment, Reynolds doesn't show any signs of slowing down. The late hours in the library — like the four concussions and the significant back injury that she has endured in her athletic career — only make the fruits of her labor sweeter. It is ultimately the company of her teammates, according to Reynolds, that makes the experience worthwhile.

"I like being on three different teams so I can have basically, like, three different sets of friends," she said. "It's hard in season to meet new people, I would say, but it's great being on three different

teams.

"Her dedication shows how much Krystina values each sport and her teammates," said Krasco.

Her favorite sport of the three? Reynolds cannot make up her mind..

"Whatever season I'm in is my favorite. It's really hard to pick."

It is rare — particularly as the climate of youth and high-school sports grows more competitive each year — that a high-school athlete is exceptional enough to be noticed and recruited to play a sport at the collegiate level, rarer still that an athlete is talented enough to try out for and commit to a second sport. As the only athlete at this school currently participating in three different sports, Reynolds dedicates hundreds of hours to Middlebury's athletic programs throughout the year, and does so without complaint.

The many sacrifices that accompany her commitment are irrelevant in comparison to the feeling of stepping onto the field, or court, with her teammates, a feeling that Reynolds says makes the whole thing worthwhile.

"I honestly don't know what I would be doing if I weren't in-season," she said. "That's all I really know."

KRYSTINA BY THE NUMB3RS

206

Goals scored by Krystina in four years of high-school lacrosse at Hamden Hall Country Day School.

Points — on 91 goals and 21 assists — during Krystina's high-school soccer career.

112

1,000

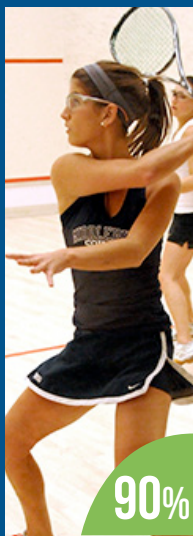
Career points for Krystina on the basketball court at Hamden Hall.

All-Area selections for Krystina during high school: two in lacrosse and one each in soccer and basketball.

4

266

Days in-season for Krystina each year, per NCAA and NESCAC rules.



90%



82%



77%



77%



73%



72%



72%

TOP 10 BOTTOM 10 % TEAM MEMBERS FROM T



56%



55%



55%



55%



53%



52%



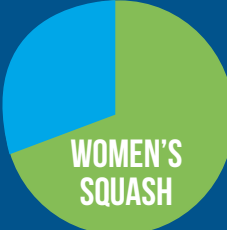
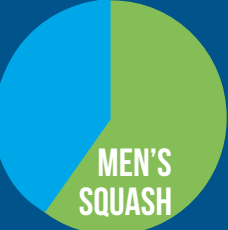
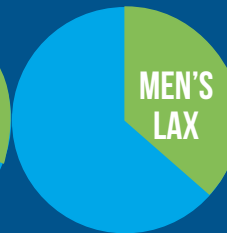
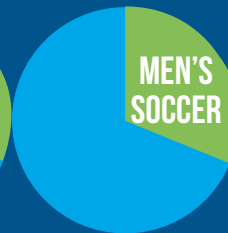
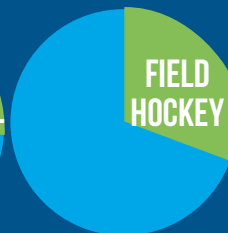
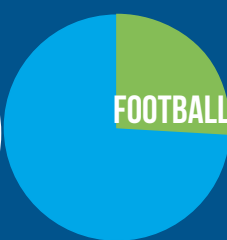
49%



39%

PREP SCHOOLS

TEAMS WITH PREP
SCHOOL POPULATION >
ATHLETIC DEPT. AVG.



● = % OF TEAM MATRICULATED FROM PREP SCHOOL ● = OTHER

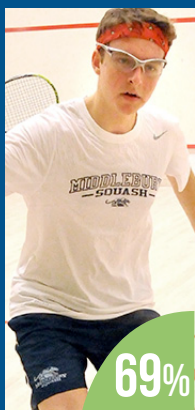




71%



70%



69%

STUDENT BODY
AT LARGE

47%

THE NORTHEAST



%



33%



33%

RANK
ATHLETES

- 1 23 - HOTCHKISS
- 2 21 - DEERFIELD
- 3 19 - DELBARTON
- 4 15 - LAWRENCEVILLE
- 5 15 - CHOATE
- 6 15 - BELMONT HILL
- 7 14 - PINGRY
- 8 14 - PHILLIPS ANDOVER
- 9 13 - LOOMIS CHAFFEE
- 10 12 - ST. PAUL'S
- 11 11 - BRUNSWICK
- 12 11 - NOBLE & GREENOUGH
- 13 11 - WESTMINSTER
- 14 10 - TAFT

AT SEND THE
ST ATHLETES
MIDDLEBURYBORN,
RAISED
AND

RECRUITED

BY FRITZ PARKER | GRAPHICS BY OLIVA ALLEN

Many forces converge to qualify a young person to compete in athletics at Middlebury. Aside from being academically within the College's reach, these high-schoolers must be talented enough at their chosen sport — or sports — to swing it in an athletic conference that ranks at or near the top of Division III in nearly every sport. With the small pool that remains, Middlebury must still compete with the rest of the NESCAC to persuade these teenagers that this small, academic New-England college is somehow superior to the rest.

It is understandable, then, that recruiting plays a crucial role in the success of any team here at Middlebury. With the imperative of bringing in the best possible recruits, a coach cannot sit by idly and hope that a talented point guard or breaststroker happens to submit an application. They must recruit that person, initiating a process that often involves travel, hours of game film or in-person evaluation and extensive back-and-forth communication — all things that take time and cost the money, both for the College and for the families of recruits. At the end of the often multi-year process of recruiting, who ends up wearing Panther blue can have a lot to do with how coaches conduct that process, what their priorities are in evaluating prospects and how they choose to focus their limited resources.

In order to cut to the core of the recruiting process, *Middlebury Sports Magazine* constructed a database of every athlete to appear on a Middlebury varsity athletic roster between the fall of 2010 and the spring of 2015 — a five-year period. Athletes were grouped by sport, and sorted according to their home state and the high school which they attended. While it is difficult or impossible to quantify the recruiting methods of any particular coach or program, these numbers provide a unique opportunity to answer one of the most fundamental questions that can be asked of the recruiting process: who are our coaches recruiting and where are they finding these recruits?

It should not come as a surprise that different teams at Middlebury end up bringing in different kinds of people. Many sports are by nature geographically restrictive or are played more competitively in some parts of the country than in others. It stands to reason that Middlebury's teams would fall in with these national trends, getting players from the areas where the best players live.

Some Middlebury teams are composed thusly. Volleyball, for example, gets just 39 percent of its players from the northeast which, according to head coach Sarah Raunecker, is consistently "the weakest region for high-school and club volleyball."

This is not always how the numbers play out, however. In football — a sport in which just two of the nation's 100 top recruits last year, according to ESPN, hailed from the northeast — the trend is reversed with 73 percent of Middlebury's players coming from the region. Baseball and softball are two other traditional 'warm-weather' sports with above average numbers of players from the northeast.

Middlebury coaches attribute this trend primarily to the difficulty of recruiting so far from home, particularly in sports which require coaches to observe prospects in person. With limited time and money, coaches must economize on their recruiting, which means that long, expensive trips to the south, Midwest or pacific coast are generally off the table.

"Being able to get there in a car is a big deal," said men's basketball coach Jeff Brown, whose team has had the third highest percentage of northeasterners on its roster. "We generally don't go farther south than Philadelphia. We're certainly receptive to reaching out to different parts of the country, but there are parts of the country which haven't had a lot of players end up in the program: Texas, Florida and the Midwest specifically."

For a player from outside the northeast, getting recruited by Middlebury often means several trips to the region for recruiting events and on-campus visits, a significant commitment of both time and money that simply is not feasible for most. "It's the financial end that causes it," said Brown, "the ability to go to different parts of the country. California is the state where we attract the most students, but I've only been there once in the last 15 years."

Of the three factors sampled, geography rendered the most significant results. Middlebury athletes are 18 percent more likely to come from the northeast than are Middlebury students in general. 23 of the 27 teams sampled are made up by a majority of northeasterners.

Volleyball is not one of those 23. Unlike many of her colleagues, Raunecker regularly travels outside the northeast in her recruiting, and it shows in the stats.

"I go to club tournaments all over the place," Raunecker said. "I'm going this weekend to Indianapolis, but I've been in the past to the southwest and to tournaments in places like Las Vegas. It's smart to recruit from outside just the northeast."

Although she attributes this trend to the specific circumstances of the sport, Raunecker also acknowledges that her strategy is not one that all coaches take.

"I think there are some coaches who really target their recruiting at a specific region," Raunecker said. "If it were up to me, I'd like to have kids from all parts of the country. If I had two similar players who wanted to come, I would love to take the kid who's a little bit different."

Many of the sports with high numbers of players from outside the northeast rely upon recruiting services to provide the subjective ratings that the coaches cannot. In tennis, for example, recruiting is centralized on a few websites that bring together prospects from around the world on one platform.

"I've gotten pretty sophisticated about reading it," said men's tennis coach Bob Hansen. "Coaches now are starting to look at a few different ratings services. You go on there and the academic kids will all be interested in the same schools. You could spend your whole day on that — some coaches do."

"I'll put in academic baselines, and they filter the athletes to meet those specific criteria," said Raunecker. "I send random letters out in response to hits from the recruiting services."

According to Hansen, this technology — combined with the inherent attractiveness of Middlebury — allows him to get top recruits from all parts of the country.

"I want kids to come here — to the Antarctic — who are from California, Texas, Florida and some of the south,"

Hansen said. "There are kids around the country who can play, but they're centered in those areas. I think it is the reputation of Middlebury and my past success that allows us to be in the conversation."

Hansen — whose first two recruiting classes at Middlebury both ranked among the top 10 in Division III — suggests that this approach has been crucial in his attempts to frame Division III as more than a fallback option for Division-I hopefuls.

"A lot of coaches try to position themselves as the number-one backup for the Ivy League schools," he said. "I don't like that position. I would much rather have them say, 'I'd rather go to Middlebury,' and have it be their first choice."

Even more so than they were geographically, Middlebury teams were widely split on the number of players that they get from private high schools, particularly from northeastern preparatory schools. From the softball team at 24 percent to the women's squash team at 97 percent, our data show that the number of prep-school athletes who end up on Middlebury rosters varies widely between programs.

The seven teams with the most members from private schools all compete in sports that are comparatively financially restrictive: squash, alpine skiing, ice hockey and tennis. The first three all require specialized facilities that are unlikely to be found at most public high schools. Tennis, meanwhile, is one of the sports played at Middlebury which draws most heavily from highly competitive club teams. These clubs — similar to the equivalents in other sports — generally require a significant investment of both time and money from the families of individual athletes.

"I've found that there's a lot of interest in Middlebury from the profile of good tennis players," Hansen said.

Private schools — particularly prep schools — can be an attractive recruiting target for coaches because of the perception that their academic standards are higher than those at most public schools.

"In my time, we've ended up with more private-school student-athletes of late," said Brown. "The students are strong, and the level of play is very good."

In these smaller private-school athletic programs, one athlete coming to Middlebury often sows the seed for future athletes to follow, particularly if the college coach remains in contact with the high-school coach.

"It's always helpful when you're involved with a program where we've gotten players in the past," said Brown. "I find that the longer that you're involved in the coaching world, the more the contacts grow."

On the other end of the spectrum were less resource-intensive sports like softball, cross country, track and swimming. The latter three are all sports in which results are objectively measured, allowing coaches simply to assess a prospect's times and marks instead of going through the lengthy process of subjective assessment.

While the data on school type for athletes were overall fairly close to those of the

general student population, Middlebury athletes in these sports were actually more likely to come from public high schools than were students in general.

One of the things that struck me most from my conversations with Middlebury coaches for this project was how little year-over-year continuity they seemed to assign to their recruiting strategies. While every coach was aware of their last two or three recruiting classes, none had access to comprehensive information about which modes of contacting recruits — online forms, club tournaments, showcases, recruiting services, etc. — had rendered the best results.

"I would love to determine some of this stuff a little bit more, just so I could evaluate my own practices," Raunecker said. "I lose track even of how I originally made contact with some of the players on my current team."

"I wish I knew the prescription," Hansen said. "I think I'm just now catching up to the rest of the coaches. I've always been scrambling up to the last minute, and all the other coaches kind of laugh at me."

As the junior year of high school becomes increasingly crucial to recruiting, even in Division III, these coaches must juggle the simultaneous recruitment of two classes of high-school students with their primary coaching duties to their college teams. Without the opportunity ever to step off the recruiting treadmill, most coaches have been able to define only vaguely what has worked for them in the past.

"My first year at Middlebury I don't even know what I was doing, and I got the fourth best recruiting class in the country in Division III," Hansen said. "I kind of fumbled the next two years, but they've turned out to be far better than I thought."

It just might be the case that recruiting is such a constant scramble that virtually no coaches have the luxury of picking and choosing between qualified prospects as an admissions officer would. Without this luxury, a great player with strong grades becomes virtually indistinguishable from any other such player, regardless of who they are or where they come from. Most coaches step into each year's recruiting process with little in mind except finding the best recruits who stand a chance of being admitted to Middlebury.

This, of course, is at the heart of all recruiting. However, in the ever-more-competitive environment of college athletics, finding the best recruits usually means reverting to the most familiar and most comfortable recruiting methods. It thus becomes increasingly important — and, looking at the data, increasingly visible — where each coach's comfort zone lies.

Reason suggests that a static recruiting strategy would render similar results each year, and the year-over-year similarity in most teams' demographics testifies to the fact that few Middlebury coaches have had the opportunity or occasion to alter their strategies significantly as the makeup of the college community continues to change under their feet.

At the end of the day, it is the quality of the people that are recruited to come to

Middlebury as athletes that matters most — their character, academic ability and athletic talent — not where those people come from. As is the case with every student who is accepted here, however, diversity is a close second in terms of its overall effect on the college community. Where someone grows up and where they go to high school are factors that lie at the intersection of some of the most central aspects of diversity that we as a college have decided to value: those of race, geography and socioeconomic class.

Our data show that each athletic team here contributes to the puzzle of diversity in its own way. Some teams draw virtually all of their members from elite northeastern prep schools, a demographic that is already greatly overrepresented in the college community. Others do exactly the opposite, bringing in athletes who fill conspicuous gaps in the fabric of the student body.

There is no obvious way to recruit a more diverse community of athletes to come here. Because some coaches limit their recruiting out of necessity rather than preference, one solution would be to increase the resources which we allocate for recruiting. Is that really how we want to be spending our money though? This question, among others, is one that we as a college community must tackle as Middlebury continues to become more well-known — on the basis of both its academic and athletic reputation — across the country and around the globe.

In the meantime, the more coaches can do to get outside the box of their traditional recruiting processes, the more diverse the eventual crop of recruits will be. This may mean reaching out to talented prospects in new geographic areas or relying less on existing prep-school and club pipelines for recruits. It could even be more simple than that, as some Middlebury coaches have already found that online recruiting platforms can connect them with the best prospects regardless of geography. These innovations might involve an amount of risk, but our data suggest that many of the coaches who have already implemented these strategies have achieved positive results. The bigger the pool, the bigger the fish.

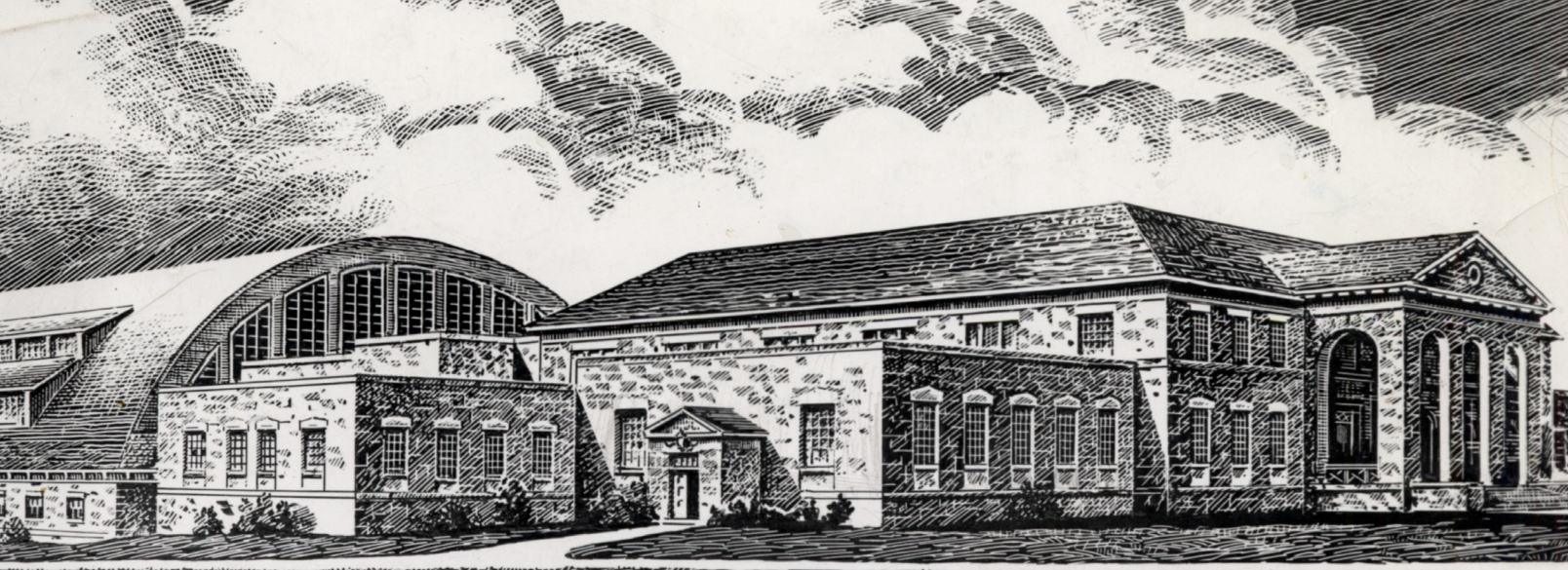
ABOUT THE DATA

Data was collected on Middlebury athletic rosters over the past five years. Athletes on more than one team were counted as participating in both sports.

Because the terms 'Northeast' and 'prep school' are necessarily subjective, we defined the terms as follows:

'Northeast' was considered to be the following states: Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

'Prep schools' were defined as independent schools in the Northeast competing in the New England Preparatory School Athletic Council or Ivy Prep League. Delbarton School, Lawrenceville School and Pingry School (NJ) were additionally considered.



“a thrilling memorial”

The Field Houses of Middlebury College

by Fritz Parker

Photos courtesy of the Middlebury and Springfield College archives

On June 11, 1949 a grand-opening ceremony was held in Middlebury's new Memorial Field House. The keynote speaker at the event was U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations and native Vermonter Warren Austin. Also in attendance were then Middlebury President Samuel Stratton and countless trustees, administrators and alumni who had collectively helped to raise over \$400,000 in the College's most ambitious capital campaign to date in order to make the new facility a reality.

Those in attendance saw firsthand that the field house was unlike any building that had existed previously at Middlebury. The facility – located across Route 30 from the Delta Upsilon fraternity house, next to the baseball diamond at Porter Field – boasted three indoor tennis courts, a basketball gym, team locker rooms and athletic-department offices. It also contained a marble memorial to the 57 Middlebury students who perished in World War II, in whose memory the building was dedicated. At nearly 30,000 square feet, it was several times the size of the College's previous indoor athletic facility, McCullough Gym.

At the time of its conception, Memorial Field House was to be the centerpiece of a grand new indoor home for Middlebury athletics, the central hub of a marble-walled complex that would revolutionize the playing of sport at the College. That complex – according to a 1946 fundraising brochure – would contain a dirt-floored field house for field-sport practices, a running track, removable wooden flooring and the College's first ever swimming pool, providing an indoor venue for “practically all Middlebury athletic activities for men and women – basketball, field hockey, football, baseball, tennis, track”

As time and circumstance would dictate, however, that grand vision would long go unfulfilled. As it still stands today, Memorial Field House has suffered from funding shortfalls and shifting priorities throughout its more than 65 years of life. Never truly providing the singular “home for Middlebury athletics for generations to come” as which it was billed, the facility has nonetheless been an austere yet crucial refuge from winter's chill for

countless Panther teams over the decades, all despite its effective replacement in the 1970s – resulting in perhaps the greatest facilities debacle in the College's history – then again with the expansion of the athletic facilities in the new millennium.

Memorial Field House is the longest chapter in the 100-plus-year history of Middlebury grappling with the prospect of supporting competitive athletics in one of the nation's least hospitable climates, a history which has culminated this spring in the opening of Virtue Field House. This is an account of that history.

Prior to the opening of Memorial Field House in 1949, athletics at Middlebury were nearly unrecognizable from how they exist today, particularly during the winter months. While McCullough Gym – which opened in 1912 and remains only slightly modified as the Social Space in McCullough Student Center – contained a basketball court, the men's varsity basketball team played nearly all of its home games in the town gymnasium on Court Street. From its completion, McCullough was designated as the men's gymnasium, leaving the College's female students to use a small facility in the basement of Pearsons Hall, then the residential center of the Women's College. The hockey team played outdoors on a makeshift rink that was annually constructed between McCullough and Voter Hall.

“When the sun went down, the McCullough gym would obscure some of the hockey rink,” said Assistant Professor of American Studies Karl Lindholm '67. “So half of the rink would be slushy, and the other half would have good, hard ice. Hockey was a real outdoor sport then.”

The holdover of snow and cold temperatures well into April, meanwhile, presented challenges to the Middlebury spring sports teams.

Perhaps the most enterprising response to the weather came from the track team. After years of short spring competitive seasons as the snow lay deep on the cinder track at Porter Field, the College in 1931 built a 150-yard wooden board track on the empty lot behind McCullough Gym, on the site currently occupied by

Crossroads Café. That track – with tight banked turns that sent many hapless runners slipping off the slick wood – was shoveled periodically during the winter to allow for track practice.

With the construction of the board track, Middlebury began during the 1930s to field an annual mile relay team that would compete during the winter season. That team would travel to Boston, Montreal and New York to compete in large indoor collegiate competitions. At these competitions, the Panthers would be one of the only teams to have done their training outdoors during the coldest months of the year, as the Kaleidoscope yearbook bemoaned in 1950: “Winter track is not necessarily indoor track at Middlebury . . . most of the training is done running around the aged grinder beside McCullough which is generally surrounded by, or covered with, snow.” The McCullough board track also featured in the College's social life, hosting an annual tournament of relay races each March between the fraternities.

In particularly cold or snowy years, however, the track – like all of the college's other outdoor facilities – would be unusable until well into the spring, leaving the spring teams pent up inside waiting for the snow to melt. For the baseball team, this meant delayed starts to the season as they waited for Porter Field to thaw. The women's field hockey team – which played their games on Battell Field during the spring – often played as few as two or three games during weather-shortened seasons.

By the mid-1940s, it was clear the Middlebury would need to modernize its athletic facilities in order to keep pace with other New England colleges. In March of 1945, the Campus wrote of the College's long-term facilities plan:

“Priority for all improvements goes to a new and enlarged gymnasium, which may possibly include sports activities for both men and women. Such a building will

AMBITION

A 1946 architectural preview of the planned “physical education unit” along South Main Street – to include a field house, gymnasium and swimming pool. It would be over half a century before such a facility would exist on the Middlebury campus.



BACK IN THE DAY

Built in 1912, McCullough Gym (above) served as the indoor home for Middlebury athletics until the opening of Memorial Field House in 1949. The grassy field in front of the gym was the location of an ice hockey rink during the winter months. From 1931 until 1963, the wooden board track behind McCullough (left, shown here in a 1940 promotional film) provided the track team with a training facility while the cinder track at Porter Field was still buried in snow.

simply a facsimile of a heartbreaking letter written by a Middlebury student to his father in 1943, which said that the young man had decided to enlist in the Army. That

student – as the flyer was quick to point out – would perish in the war.

The blueprint of the field house, meanwhile, was ambitious in measure to the proposed dollar amount. The original architect's rendering called for a structure enclosed in limestone – the same material used on Old Stone Row – which would be “in the finest tradition of New England college architecture.” On the inside, the field house was billed as a singular solution to the problem of Vermont weather; it would include a full-size dirty playing field and running track for spring athletic teams, in addition to improved courts for basketball and indoor training. It would be lit, according to the promotional materials, by “the most modern scientific equipment.”

This plan did not last long. After the Memorial Fund passed the midway point of \$350,000 in early 1947, donations began to fizzle. By the end of fundraising in August of 1949, the dollar amount had risen to just \$405,366 – nearly \$300,000 short of the original goal. Unable to fund the project which they had originally proposed, College officials began to amend the plans. Most of the limestone façade was scrapped in favor of more austere wood paneling. The field and track also were thrown out, making the remaining facility more of a gymnasium than an actual field house. The final blueprint that then took shape was more modest, calling for a single rectangular structure split between tennis courts and a hardwood basketball gym, separated by locker rooms, a training room and the World War II memorial.

The amended plan was boosted by the arrival of the Sampson Drill Halls. During the war, the U.S. Naval Training Station in Sampson, N.Y. had erected a pair of large, rectangular halls to serve as an indoor drilling ground. When they no longer needed the buildings after the war had ended, Navy officials granted the two halls to Middlebury and Springfield College – both of which had served as training centers for naval V-12 candidates during the war – and the structures were subsequently disassembled, loaded onto trucks and brought to their new locations.

Middlebury's Sampson Hall arrived in Vermont in April of 1948, where construction was already underway along South Main Street. Construction was delayed while crews first diverted then bridged the stream which ran through the site. The long, rectangular hall was divided down the middle by the installation of a set of interior walls, which separated the tennis courts – now Nelson Arena – from the basketball court which would later be renamed Pepin Gymnasium. The prefabricated structures went up quickly; after just six months, the 120-foot laminated wood arches which made up the roof had all been erected, and the ceiling was nearly complete. After 14 months of construction, the facility was complete and the new Memorial Field House was dedicated.

Memorial Field House, wrote longtime Middlebury professor and Vice President Stephen A. Freeman in a 1988 letter, “now enlarged, modernized, and in superb condition, is the center of the College's athletic activities and physical fitness programs, and of many college events.”

Springfield's Sampson Hall, meanwhile, would live a markedly shorter life than its Middlebury counterpart. Also erected under the name of Memorial Field House, Springfield's facility was condemned due to roof instability in 1979 and demolished after just 30 years of service.

Middlebury's Memorial Field House never truly served the function under which it was originally conceived. As hockey was a burgeoning favorite of the College community when the building opened in 1949, the larger court portion was quickly repurposed as an indoor ice rink. In the early years, the ice was left to freeze naturally as the temperature dropped in late fall, leaving the functionality of the rink at the mercy of the weather. In 1955, the facility was upgraded with a state-of-the-art refrigerated floor, allowing the hockey team to play in all weather. The norm quickly became that the field house was used for hockey during the winter season, then converted to tennis courts during the spring.

“It was ‘the rink,’” recalled Lindholm. “Ice hockey was a big deal. You went to the games. The four strongest

probably be in part the form of a large indoor cage where baseball, football and women's hockey may be practiced with ease, thus leaving the present women's athletic field open to other projects. Around the enclosed field will be a cinder track, probably a quarter of a mile in length, while remaining portions of the gymnasium will include enlarged fields for the indoor sports now practiced at the college. Construction of a swimming pool is also being considered.”

Over the next two years, this “new and enlarged gymnasium” would morph into the now-recognizable form of Memorial Field House.

In June of 1946, the College began soliciting alumni and friends for contributions to the Memorial Fund, advertising a plan for a “Field House, Swimming Pool, and Gymnasium” which were to be erected on the other side of South Main Street, a site which was then empty fields and an intermittent stream. The Fund aimed to raise some \$700,000 that would be necessary for the project – an ambitious goal equal to about \$8 million in 2015.

In pursuit of this lofty goal, the College spun the project as “a thrilling memorial” to the memory of the students who had died in the recent world war, pulling on emotional strings as they sought donations. In a nine-page packet of promotional material, they wrote: “Giving is a privilege. It may mean a sacrifice, but whatever the sacrifice, it will be small indeed in comparison with the supreme gift that 57 gallant sons of Middlebury made for their country and for you.” Other materials made even more explicit use of such mournful sentimentality; one such flyer which was mailed to alumni was

fraternities were right there on the hill. Athletes out of season would get liquored up and go down to the games.”

As the team had their best seasons to date in the late 1950s and early 1960s, hockey games in Memorial became a fixture of the winter months on campus. Compared to today’s facilities, the field house afforded little protection for spectators from the outside chill.

“I just remember it was so cold,” said Lindholm. “It was so cold. Every time something good happened, everybody clapped with their gloves on, and it made the most distinctive sound.”

A member of the basketball team during his years as a student, Lindholm remembers the large crowds that, despite the cold, preferred the hockey games to the basketball games located across the entranceway in Memorial.

“At the period breaks in hockey, all of the fans would come into the gym to warm up,” he said. “We’d be playing basketball in front of 30 or 40 people and, at some arbitrary point in the basketball game, the gym would fill. Then somebody would come in 15 minutes later and say ‘Third period’s starting,’ and they would all leave. We didn’t like it. At some point we threatened to lock the doors.”

Most of the College’s outdoor sports teams, meanwhile, were still without an indoor home. The track team continued to use the board track behind McCullough until it was bulldozed to make room for a swimming pool in 1963. Other teams were back to their old tactic of waiting for warmer temperatures to begin outdoor play, as the Campus reported in 1960: “March 20 rolls around. The snow is still 8 inches deep outside. Lacrosse players are preparing for their rumored exhibition games . . . The track team flows around the small wooden oval. The golfers are inside sitting around.”

The teams – most of which were not yet nationally competitive during this period – made due with the existing facility. The attitude at the time, according to Lindholm, was one of relative apathy about the competitiveness of the College’s athletic program, and resistance to the idea that the school should aim to field a competitive team in every sport.

“I played baseball in the gym when I was here,” said Lindholm. “It was good enough for us. We had a lot of lousy team, but we were the athletes on those teams and we didn’t mind. We didn’t say, ‘We deserve better.’ We thought we were living pretty high.”

It was the women’s teams, however, which were hit hardest by the facility restrictions. Women had been locked out of Memorial Field House after the plans were downsized in response to funding shortfalls. After the field house opened, McCullough was repurposed as the gymnasium of the Women’s College, an upgrade over the old facility in Pearsons but still far inferior to the

all-male field house.

During the 1960s, the field hockey, lacrosse and baseball teams were still accustomed to playing fewer than 10 games each year. While Memorial Field House continued to thrive as a venue for men’s hockey and basketball, it had become clear to many that another facility was needed to fill the gaps that Memorial could not.

As Starr Library – now the Axinn Center – looked to be in need to renovation at the same time, the College was unable to commit a large sum of money for the construction of an entirely new, freestanding field house. Instead, they sought out an architect, Daniel F. Tully Associates of Melrose, Mass., who had developed a model of prefabricated college athletic facilities which had been used previously at Brown University and Boston College. For \$1 million – about \$5.5 million in 2015 – and in less than a year, Tully could erect one of their prefab field houses on the Middlebury campus as an appendage to Memorial. The College agreed and, in 1973, construction began on what would become Fletcher Field House.

From the moment that construction began, Fletcher’s design was the subject of much derision. The building’s “hyperbolic parabola” roof – supposed by the architects to be the most efficient way of covering a large field house – was likened in the Campus to “an alligator,” “a circus tent” and “just a plain eyesore.” The newspaper expressed skepticism about the integrity of the roof design, suggesting that a leaking roof “could be a potential trouble spot for Fletcher Field House.” By the time that it opened in the early spring of 1974, Fletcher had already garnered a negative reputation amongst the college community.

The aesthetic of Fletcher was no-frills, to say the

A FIELD HOUSE

Memorial Field House began its life as a drill hall at the U.S. Naval Training Station in Sampson, N.Y. (top right). A twin drill hall was deeded to Springfield College, where it served a brief life as a field house (below left). Middlebury’s field house, meanwhile, was quickly converted to the College’s first indoor ice rink. The rink was renamed Nelson Arena (below right) in 1975, and would host hockey games until its replacement by Kenyon Arena in 1999.

least. Partition between the field and squash portions was achieved with an unadorned cinderblock wall. The facility had no bathroom or plumbing system. An early plan for an underground tunnel connecting the building to Memorial was scrapped as a cost-saving measure, replaced instead by a narrow, dimly lit, concrete hallway which sloped from Fletcher down to the older field house.

“That tunnel wasn’t heated or anything,” said men’s baseball coach Bob Smith, who has been at the College since 1979. “It had lights with cages around them, but it was always kind of dark in there.”

In function, though, Fletcher presented a quick and relatively cheap solution to Memorial’s lack of indoor field space. It was larger than its predecessor at 42,000 square feet and included six tennis courts, a baseball infield and a non-regulation, four-lane polyurethane running track, as well as a separate section containing the College’s first squash courts. An intricate system of netting allowed for several of these activities to occur simultaneously, maximizing Fletcher’s utility to the varsity athletic program.

The Campus applauded the fact that, in the new facility, “baseball and track can work out at the same time without conflict and so can track and lacrosse.” Fletcher – according to then Director of Athletics Richard Colman – effectively addressed the fact that “for years, Middlebury has suffered from late spring practice starts in its varsity sports.” It also greatly expanded the College’s capacity for intramural and recreational sports, particularly the physical education classes which remain in the curriculum to this day.



"The Circus Tent"

Erected in 1974, Fletcher Field House stood for just 28 years before structural issues with the roof led to its early demolition. Even before these problems manifested, the structure's distinct roof design made it the subject of countless jokes on campus. Fletcher's architectural quirks did not end with the roof: the building lacked plumbing, featured a shin-busting polyurethane floor and was connected to Memorial Field House by a dimly-lit hallway. On the inside, Fletcher provided much-needed indoor practice space for many of the College's teams. The air-supported 'Bubble' — sought originally as a temporary solution to Fletcher's leaking roof — covered Fletcher's interior from 2002 until 2013, on the site now occupied by Virtue Field House.



"Just like this new field house does, it revolutionized what you can do inside," Smith said. "Back at that time, it was a novelty to be able to practice inside. It was a real asset to have something like that."

Though it never truly overcame its ugly-duckling status, Fletcher functioned for a time as the primary hub for athletics at Middlebury. It allowed the College to ramp up its selection of varsity programs, particularly those for women. It provided an indoor facility for women's lacrosse and field hockey as they began to take off in the late 1970s after the passage of Title IX. With the additional space provided by the new facility, squash was added as a varsity sport in 1976, indoor track in 1989 and softball in 1988.

It was in Fletcher Field House — and, according to Lindholm, under the presidency of John McCardell — that Middlebury's athletic program began to rise to national prominence. In 1993 the NESCAC lifted its ban on NCAA play in all sports but football, and Middlebury responded by winning an unprecedented 18 national championships in just 10 years.

"It was McCardell who came in and gave us ambition," said Lindholm. "He said, 'If Williams can finish at the top of the rankings and can be considered the number-one athletic school, why can't we? Why do we have to have modest athletic teams?' At some point we decided we had to have winning teams, so we started to take things more seriously."

This time-period also saw significant renovations and additions to the Middlebury athletic complex. In 1982 Memorial Field House underwent extensive renovation, adding a second floor to the interior of the structure and dedicating the gymnasium section of the old field house as Pepin Gym. In 1985 the paved section — after more than 35 years of service as a hockey rink — was officially renamed Nelson Arena. An 18-lane, Olympic-size pool was added to the back of the complex in 1997, finally marking the completion of the "physical education unit" which had been in the works since 1946. In 1999 Kenyon Arena went up between the pool and Fletcher as the College's first facility designed with hockey in mind, and Nelson was returned to its original function as an indoor tennis facility.

"Middlebury got bigger," recalled Lindholm. "Our program had to expand to meet the opportunities. I think that's when our teams got really good."

The expansion of the athletic program — both in terms of facilities and ambition — was not without casualty. Many former Panthers began to feel that the new, more competitive face of Middlebury athletics was simply too far removed from "the old, unpretentious Middlebury" that they remembered.

"There was a kind of affection for the old Memorial field house," said Lindholm, "but it was a different era. It was a whole different scene. We were always pretty happy, but it became unacceptable for a school like Middlebury to have a facility that limited."

"There's something about Nelson," said men's tennis coach Bob Hansen. "It just has so much soul."

Slowly but surely, however, Fletcher's eccentric design and flimsy construction began to undermine its functionality. Just as the skeptics had predicted, roof leakage was a chronic problem that only intensified over time. By the 1990s, Middlebury athletes had grown accustomed to seeing large puddles on the floor as they warmed up for practice. Leakage caused the building to be closed for the first time in 1998 as engineers inspected and patched the roof, but the problem persisted and similar closures became the norm.

"It wasn't that well-built," said Smith. "There were mushrooms growing on the ceiling because of the moisture. The floor wasn't great either — the lacrosse teams didn't like to practice in there because they had so

many shin-splint problems."

By 2001 the leaking had gotten so bad that Fletcher had to be closed for over a week during February, causing Special Advisor to the Director of Athletics Mickey Heinecken to proclaim to the Campus that "something needs to be done." Having neither the time nor money to construct a replacement but recognizing the importance of keeping Fletcher a viable space for athletic practices, college officials opted for an air-supported structure as its temporary replacement.

During the summer of 2002 — just 28 years after it went up — Fletcher Field House was demolished and replaced by the iconic white structure which quickly came to be known as the Bubble. While it sat upon the same floor scheme as the original permanent structure, the Bubble significantly reduced the amount of usable floor space in the facility. The physical structure of the Bubble was leased to the College for 10 years, but Heinecken expressed hope on behalf of the entire department that that it would be gone before then.

"We'd like it to be as short a period of time as possible," he told the Campus. "But I don't think anybody's anticipating anything happening in the near future."

As it happened, the Bubble would remain in place until May of 2013, when it was deflated and trucked down Route 30 to its new home at Castleton State College, making room for the latest field house which would take its place.

When Virtue Field House was officially unveiled on January 24, 2015, it became the third such facility to enter the service of the Middlebury athletic department in less than 70 years. Like the first two, it was opened to great fanfare; college officials trumpeted its functionality and vision, proclaiming that it would revolutionize the experience of Middlebury athletes for generations to come.

History has shown, however, that such grand statements are not always realized. Middlebury's first field house, hampered in its development by financial troubles, never achieved the extraordinary hopes which were set for it. Memorial Field House nonetheless served — and continues to serve — a crucial role in the everyday life of Middlebury athletics, overcoming through longevity what it originally lacked in functionality. The College's second field house provided a harder lesson. Borne out of momentary desperation and haphazard planning, the "circus tent" did not stand the test of time and has gone down as a black mark in the College's architectural history.

If there is a facility that can break the mold and truly meet the needs of Middlebury athletes for years to come, this most recent iteration of the field house could certainly be it.

Encompassing some 110,000 square feet, Virtue Field House is more than twice the size of Fletcher and more than three times the size of Memorial. With an initial price tag of \$29 million, it does not share in the comparatively austere origins which plagued its predecessors. It contains Middlebury's first ever competition indoor track, which encircles an artificial turf field which is the first indoor playable surface to ever exist at the College. It completes a slowly growing athletic complex which, for the first time in the College's history, has the capability to provide first-rate practice space for every varsity team regardless of the whims of Vermont weather.

Of course only time will tell if Virtue Field House lives up to the expectations that the college community has for it. On preliminary intuition alone, it seems that Middlebury may have finally found the field house which it has so long been seeking.

Off the field and into the **CLASSROOM**



BY JOE FLAHERTY AND EMILY BUSTARD

What do you wear on the first day of class? For some varsity athletes at the College, the question isn't as simple as it sounds. Athletic gear, a mark of Panther pride on the field, to hear some student-athletes tell it, may not be as clear-cut in the classroom.

The Middlebury Sports Magazine delved into what issues athletes face once they step off the field and into the corridors and classrooms of Munroe, Axinn, and Bicentennial Hall. The social identity that comes with being an athlete brings with it effects on the choice of a major, dealing with conflicts between academics and athletic events and, yes, what to wear on day one of the semester.

One person in the College community who has experienced a variety of the angles of athletics and academics is Emeritus Dean of Advising and Assistant Professor of American Studies Karl Lindholm '67. Lindholm is a Middlebury graduate who played varsity basketball and baseball at the College before returning to positions as a dean and later as a professor at Middlebury. According to Lindholm, any perceived stigma against student-athletes may be overblown.

"You'll find professors at Middlebury who think athletics

are overemphasized, or who don't like it when their athletes don't come to class because they have games," Lindholm said. "The athletes have their own paranoia, which really bothers me sometimes. If your professor says, 'I'm bothered by the fact that you're not going to come to class because you have a game,' the teacher doesn't hate athletes. I think it's as much a pride thing as an anti-athletic stance."

From his perspective as a former dean, a former faculty-affiliate for the baseball team and an American Studies professor who offers sports-themed courses like "Baseball's Negro Leagues," Lindholm has taught and interacted with many athletes. He says that the quality of the College's student-athlete has never been better.

"What I have noticed, probably because I teach a lot of athletes...is that the athletes that I have now are stronger students than ever," Lindholm said. "They're brighter and harder working than the students from thirty years ago."

The data seems to agree. Over 250 Middlebury athletes were named to the 2013-2014 NESCAC All-Academic Team, placing Middlebury among the most top NESCAC colleges represented on the list.



“The athletes that I have now are stronger students than ever. They’re brighter and harder working than the students from thirty years ago.”

**EMERITUS DEAN OF ADVISING AND
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF
AMERICAN STUDIES KARL LINDHOLM '67**

“I have consciously thought when I woke up on the first day of class, ‘I shouldn’t wear a football shirt today.’”

BLAKE SHAPSKINSKY '15



“At [Boston College] football players weren’t expected to be as academically rigorous.”

WIN HOMER '16.5



On the whole, Lindholm said, Middlebury’s athletics-academics controversy is not at the level of many other colleges or universities in the United States. He cited the University of North Carolina as an example of how things have gone awry at other institutions. UNC was embroiled last year in a cheating scandal involving athletes who enrolled in classes that either required minimal work or never met, and yet received high grades for the nonexistent courses.

In fact, Lindholm said, strong academics and successful athletic programs at small liberal arts colleges seem to reinforce one another.

On Williams College, which has netted the Director’s Cup 15 out of the 18 times it has been awarded, Lindholm said, “There we have a school that’s considered one of the top in the country, and it has excellent athletics.”

In 2005, Charles A. Dana Professor of Mathematics John Emerson led the College Sports Project, which evaluated data from 84 Division III colleges over five years to explore how athletic participation affects grades. The data, which has not been fully released to the public, showed that athletic participation does in fact correlate with lower levels of academic performance at D-III schools—especially highly selective ones like Middlebury.

In response to these findings, Lindholm argues that, “if you have no athletes you’re

still going to have a bottom third. The average grade at Middlebury is a high B—the most common grade given is an A—the argument is that they’re not as strong as students. But they’re still handing in all their work.”

While the performance of athletes may not differ all that much from other students, Lindholm does acknowledge the time constraints placed on student-athletes by regular-season games and, in particular, the NCAA tournament.

“In the spring, if you go to an NCAA tournament, you have to miss exams, and professors have to make adjustments. In the winter not so much, and in the fall not so much...It’s not terrible,” Lindholm conceded. “This is perhaps more of an athletic objection [in general]: I think the emphasis for all sports on the postseason has a negative impact on the regular season.”

The NCAA tournament is one of many challenges that athletes cite as hurdles in the classroom. Win Homer ’16.5, a member of the football team, said that occasionally there is a negative stereotype about athletes in the classroom — though it is worse for some teams than others.

“I know that most people aren’t making those assumptions — especially at a place like Middlebury —but it’s almost second nature,” Homer said.

Homer transferred to Middlebury from Boston College. He said some things are different at Middlebury, although it is difficult to put his finger on it.

“I can’t tell if I feel it more or less at Middlebury,” Homer said. “At [Boston College] football players weren’t expected to be as academically rigorous.”

Homer, who is 6’5”, added, “Here, sometimes I feel I feel like I stick out like as a football player because of my size.”

Occasionally, Homer said, athletes find advantages in taking courses together. When the aforementioned conflicts between exams and games arrive, the students are in the same boat and it is easier to inform the professor of the conflict.

“On the other hand,” Homer said, “you try to avoid it because you don’t want to get distracted by your friends.”

Blake Shapkinsky ’15, another member of the football team, said that athletes take classes together, though he added that the same occurs in any friend group.

Nevertheless, he said, “There is definitely a lot of informal ‘Middcourses’ going on with athletics. ‘How’s this class? How’s this professor?’ Less often, it is ‘how is this class,’ it is more ‘How is this professor? Is he interesting and engaging? Is he pretty harsh?’

Anything you could find out on Middcourses, basically. It's a very easy network because you're together so often and every day you go into practice and especially when class registration starts, you go to the guy next to you."

Gabe Weissmann '15, a lacrosse player, added that sometimes athletes choose a major or choose courses not out of predetermined tracks for sports teams, but because they are simply following teammates who preceded them.

He explained, "I think what happens is some of the kids I've seen come in don't really know what they want to do. So, certain majors are almost a fallback because they know that a bunch of other guys on the team have done it and done it successfully."

Alison Maxwell '15, a member of the cross country and track teams, said that for all the time constraints that come from having to attend practice and national tournaments, she has never felt pressure to set aside her coursework.

"Our coach would never encourage us to skip class or ever put academics second, but obviously will think of it as a bonus if we're willing to miss a class or reschedule a test or something to make her life easier and get to meets," Maxwell said.

Maxwell also emphasized that when it comes to feeling ostracized in the classroom, not all sports teams are the same.

"With my sport I don't think anyone directs negative stereotypes at us, but I do feel like other sports in general get that vibe," Maxwell said. "Some people say that if you're recruited then your academic performance is lower



than ours, and you don't actually deserve to have gotten into Middlebury."

Weissmann said that the way professors interact with varsity athletes cannot be summarized as a general rule. Nevertheless, he said the unconscious perceptions of athletes can have an impact.

"One of the biggest things is I definitely have experienced instances where because I'm an

athlete, because I play lacrosse, people think I have a certain capability or lack thereof," he said. "I'm fighting an uphill battle sometimes. People will always say that they don't judge based on those kinds of things, but it all develops subconsciously."

Additionally, he said the degree to which

"Our coach would never encourage us to skip class or ever put academics second, but obviously will think of it as a bonus if we're willing to miss a class or reschedule a test or something to make her life easier and get to meets."

ALISON MAXWELL '15

professors engage with and accommodate athletes varies.

"There are professors who don't let [athletic involvement] affect anything whatsoever—who look positively on it, are engaged and want to know what is going on in sports," Weissmann said. "And there have been instances in classrooms where, the best way I can describe it, is afraid to say I play a sport and, specifically, lacrosse. While the Middlebury lacrosse team doesn't necessarily have any negative attitude associated with it based on things that have happened, I think the sport of lacrosse, in general, does."

Shapskinsky said that starting during his sophomore year, he didn't come wearing athletic clothes on the first day of class.

"Every professor I've met personally, I've

"Certain majors are almost a fallback because they know that a bunch of other guys on the team have done it and done it successfully."

GABE WEISSMANN '15

had a good relationship with and I haven't felt discriminated against by being an athlete. But then again, people say professors in general might discriminate, so in that case I'll play it safe. I have consciously thought when I woke up on the first day of class, 'I shouldn't wear a football shirt today.'"

Shapskinsky reiterated that this habit is not the result of a bad experience but rather functions as a precaution.

He said, "I've never felt like I've been discriminated against as an athlete, but just

in case, why push it?"

Homer echoed this sentiment and said that at Boston College's orientation he and others received cautionary advice against wearing more than one item of athletic clothing at a time. Though this was not the case at



Middlebury, it shows awareness of these possible stereotypes on the larger D-I stage.

Some athletes contend that it is not athletic events that cause a divide in the classroom between athletes and non-athletes. Robert Erickson '18, a member of the baseball team, said the distinction is more social than academic.

"I don't really see most people sacrificing academics for sports," Erickson said. "I see more people sacrificing academics for partying with the sports team...I think if anything, it's the social scene [that makes people sacrifice their academics] which is somewhat tied up in athletic activity on campus."

Erickson also said that negative stereotypes of athletes with professors or other students is more of a rumor, if anything.

"I don't think I've ever experienced it directly; I've more just heard of people talking about it in general," he said. "There are some individuals who perhaps do not perform as well, and the fact that they're an athlete might be brought up more readily [as an excuse]."

The aforementioned dynamics and varying perceptions surrounding athletics at Middlebury are not exclusive to this campus, and remain an issue on a national level.

"If you're a faculty member ... I think if a person objects to athletics at Middlebury, they object to athletics nationally," said Lindholm.

By nearly any yardstick, Middlebury athletes are as good as any school around at balancing the demands of the field with the requirements in the classroom. But this may not change the way students feel about perceived negative stereotypes directed toward them when they walk in the door in athletic gear.

AN UPHILL CLIMB



Not so long ago, Middlebury's athletic rosters were filled with Vermonters. Where have they gone, and what can be done to bring them back?

by Joe MacDonald
graphics by Olivia Allen



Middlebury College is in a state of transition. Year after year, the definition of “Middlebury” grows to encompass the multiplying number of satellite entities that have emerged. The College even revamped its logo in an effort to symbolize the institution's expanding mission. As the College goes, so goes its athletic program.

Middlebury's sports teams have exploded over the past quarter-century. While a generation ago the College's athletic program was essentially limited to competitive teams in a few winter sports, the department has rapidly and successfully revamped itself over the past several decades. Simply put, the prospect of Middlebury fielding nationally competitive teams in sports like field hockey and men's golf would have just 20 years ago seemed absurd. When Middlebury won the annual Directors Cup in 2011-2012 as the top athletic program in Division III, the overhaul was complete, and the days of humble athletic teams on campus were left squarely in the past.

Bolstering the College's teams has of course meant bringing in top talent from around the region — and, in some programs, around the country — to fill rosters. Overwhelmingly, however, these student-athletes hail from places other than the state of Vermont.

The days when college varsity teams were made up of exclusively students who came to a school for its academics and not just its sports teams — not just at Middlebury, but across the country — are an aging fantasy of yesteryear. This makes the state of Vermont, at least when it comes to producing athletes capable of playing in college, an underdog. The widely-held belief is that the quality of Vermont high school sports is among the lowest in the nation, and that there are simply no more than a handful of athletes who matriculate from Vermont public high schools every year who are gifted enough

to play in college. Unfortunately, these exaggerated claims are based in truth.

For prospective college athletes hailing from Vermont, it only gets worse. The hill is getting steeper and harder to climb.

SMALL TOWN, TIGHT COMMUNITY

Vermont's rural landscape and dispersed population create a vacuum for many towns that regional or even state-wide levels of athletic competition cannot penetrate. As much as Middlebury students lament the "Middlebury bubble," through which news of the outside world sometimes fails to permeate, the phenomenon is not unique to the College, and indeed exists in other parts of Vermont. Because of this, high-school sports have the ability to enthrall entire towns, and the participants — though just 18-year-old kids — can thus become local icons.

"We get something that not many other kids are able to get from their high school experience," said Matt St. Amour '17, a member of the Middlebury basketball team who hails from tiny Swanton, Vermont in Franklin County. "I was able to be a part of something bigger than just a basketball team or just a soccer team, and especially in Vermont the high school athletes are kind of looked at on another level, kind of like an icon or a public figure."

St. Amour admitted that he has sat down to dinner at a restaurant before only to realize that the diners at the table next to him were talking about his high-school athletic exploits.

This sort of experience is not unique to 2,000-point scorers in high school basketball. Elle Gilbert '16, a member of the alpine skiing team who hails from Woodstock, Vermont, still gets recognized when she competes.

"I actually still get people that see me on the circuit and they're like, 'Oh, you're Elle Gilbert' from like, 18 million years ago," Gilbert says bashfully. "I had my glory days back when I was between 10 and 15."

The small-scale idolization of Vermont

high-school athletes can be detrimental to the athletic development of teenagers.

"This sounds weird, but I was kind of a name in the town, and sometimes it made me uncomfortable," Gilbert said. "It's kind of funny thinking back on it, actually."

Because so much attention is paid by younger children to their high school role models, the aspirations of some young athletes are limited to making it at the high-school level, as opposed to striving for a career beyond high school. St. Amour described the perception of high-school sports in other states as a "jumping pad" to college athletics, but suggests that in Vermont that is hardly the case.

"That's where I was really different from a lot of kids in my area," St. Amour said. "Growing up, it was always my goal to play in college."

Even for young athletes who hope to play sports in college, sometimes the sense of community can become a burden, forcing an athlete to forego an opportunity to jump ship and attend a prep school in another state, where the athletic competition would be better, for the chance to make it big at his or her local high school.

St. Amour is among those who had an opportunity to get out of Vermont and attend a prep school, which would have, most likely, provided him with more resources to further his athletic career.

The sophomore guard says that he felt a "little bit of an obligation to stay here for high school, just because of everything that my community and my school and my friends had given to me. If it wasn't for them I wouldn't have had the opportunity to leave in the first place."

Head football coach Bob Ritter echoed St. Amour's belief, saying that that he thinks his children — two of whom are on varsity teams at the College — would have received more recruiting attention if they had left Middlebury Union High School to attend prep school.

"I think that they would have had more exposure and probably more attention if they had been at a prep school or at a bigger school," Ritter said. "Yes, I do think that."

Vermont athletes often struggle with the decision to leave their communities, especially when they mean as much to the people in their town as a St. Amour or a Gilbert. For that reason, plenty of good athletes stay in their public high schools, forgoing the opportunity to develop their skills on a larger stage out-of-state.

Despite this, Vermont is experiencing an issue that goes well beyond athletics and that is threatening the state's future: a slow siphoning of its population.

"I had my glory days back when I was between 10 and 15. This sounds weird, but I was kind of a name in the town, and sometimes it made me uncomfortable. It's kind of funny thinking back on it, actually."

-ELLE GILBERT '16
ALPINE SKIER
WOODSTOCK, VT

THE NUMBERS GAME

According to Vermont Agency of Education reports, the number of students enrolled in Vermont public high schools, grades 9-12, has decreased every year since 2005-06. Between 2005-06 and 2014-15, enrollment in grades 9-12 in Vermont public schools decreased by 19.1 percent, down from 29,237 in 2005-06 to 23,652 this year. This issue is not entirely, or even primarily, a result of talented athletes transferring to private schools. Instead these numbers represent the growing demographic of ex-Vermonters who leave the state in search of opportunities of all sorts elsewhere.

The problem becomes even more astounding when one considers the difference between counties in Vermont. Chittendon County, which includes the greater Burlington area, accounts for nearly 25 percent of Vermont's population. Of the 5,726 students enrolled in the 12th grade in Vermont in 2014-15, 1,693, or nearly 30 percent, of those students live in Chittendon County.

Many Vermont high schools outside the Burlington area graduate classes in dozens. This year Danville School in Caledonia County has 20 students in its 12th-grade class. Rochester School in Windsor County has 15 students. The Canaan Schools in Essex County has only 12 seniors. The picture is clear and, in many parts of the state, it is bleak.

Calvin McEathron '16, a Middlebury student who ran for a seat in the state legislature as a representative from Addison County last fall, was a three-sport standout in high school at U-32 in Washington County. McEathron explains that athletic programs suffer from these low enrollments. "When you have some of the smallest schools in the nation, including some schools graduating 6-10 kids a year, having a talent pool big enough to foster a competitive environment in which kids are excited about improving is really difficult," McEathron said.

McEathron, who played two years of varsity baseball at Middlebury, suggested that the

"I felt a little bit of an obligation to stay here for high school, just because of everything that my community and my school and my friends had given to me. If it wasn't for them I wouldn't have had the opportunity to leave in the first place."

-MATT ST. AMOUR '17
BASKETBALL PLAYER
SWANTON, VT

lack of competitiveness at most Vermont high schools is among the foremost reasons that so few of the states' athletes go on to successful college careers.

"At most Vermont schools, apart from Division I, a normal baseline athlete can start

"When you have some of the smallest schools in the nation, including some schools graduating 6-10 kids a year, having a talent pool big enough to foster a competitive environment in which kids are excited about improving is really difficult. At most Vermont schools, apart from Division-I, a normal baseline athlete can start at his or her sport of choice," he said. "This results in students not pushing themselves to be their best, because they don't need to be."

**-CALVIN MCEATHRON '16
FORMER BASEBALL PLAYER
EAST MONTPELIER, VT**

at his or her sport of choice," he said. "This results in students not pushing themselves to be their best, because they don't need to be."

For the rare athlete that does pursue a college career from a Vermont public high school, he or she will likely struggle to get the exposure necessary to make it to the next level.

RECRUITING VERMONTERS

"Eight to 10 years ago the high school experience was probably the most telling and dominating in your recruiting process," Coach Ritter said, "and I think that's really changed. In just about every sport — in basketball it's AAU, in lacrosse it's the summer team you play for or the camps you go to, in baseball it's the camps that you go to, soccer it's the club team that you play for — so the high schools, not only in Vermont but across the country, have become much more inconsequential into the trajectory of recruits."

Even for the gifted Vermont athlete that decides to take his or her talents to a vaunted prep school, that student-athlete is likely to be home in the summer without a way to compete against top-notch competition. Showcase tournaments and travel teams are expensive, for one. Even for families that can afford the financial burden, there are very few options when it comes to playing on the travel or showcase circuit in the summer months.

Some might argue that there is one sport

out there in which native Vermonters still hold the comparative advantage: skiing. Indeed, five of the 19 members of this year's Middlebury alpine team hail from the Green Mountain State, the highest percentage of Vermont natives on any roster. However, there are significant barriers to entry to skiing at Middlebury, just like any other sport at the College.

It is nearly impossible for any skier from Vermont to make it to the collegiate level without attending one of the many elite ski academies in Vermont. Head Coach of the Alpine Team, Stever Barlett, did not hesitate to respond when asked how often he gets skiers who have graduated from Vermont public high schools without attending a ski academy.

"Almost never," he said.

The next hurdle is for talented 14-16 year olds to decide to leave their family and friends behind and ship off to an academy to commit themselves to skiing full-time. That is not an easy leap for a young teenager, and it takes someone with special conviction to go through with the move.

"I did feel removed from things back at Woodstock," Gilbert said, "but it didn't really bother me because I knew what I wanted to do and how to get there."

Even Gilbert, who long held the dream of ski racing in college, did not transfer to an academy full-time until her senior year.

Much like the showcase teams and camps that athletes in other sports must attend if they hope to play college athletics, ski academies are frighteningly expensive: the average full-term tuition for a boarding student at the Vermont academies attended by Middlebury alpine team members is \$49,659.

While there are ways around paying full-tuition, such as being a day student, attending for just the winter term and training with coaches without attending the school full-time, and financial aid is available at all of these academies, nevertheless the lofty tuition costs — and the cost of skiing in general — can scare away some families and curb the careers of promising young skiers.

In some sports, however, the playing field is more level. Robin Vincent '18 came to Middlebury from St. Johnsbury Academy, where she was a Vermont Division-I state champion in indoor track. Vincent was interested in attending Middlebury regardless of the opportunity to run competitively, but her fast times made her a recruitable target for cross country coach Nicole Wilkerson.

"I talked to Nicole only once," Vincent said. "I didn't really try to be recruited at all. I thought that I might run if I got in, and I got in."

Since arriving on campus, Vincent has

quickly developed into one of New England's fastest middle-distance runners. An All-NESCAC and All-New England selection in track this spring, she has run the nation's fifth fastest Division-III time in the women's 1,500 meters and appears poised for a trip to nationals in that event.

Vincent credits her high school's track program for setting her up for success in college track.

"I'd like to think that I had untapped potential," she said. "I had a really passionate coach in high school, which helped a lot. The mentality in college isn't all that different, because my coach in high school was pretty intense. But the mileage and intensity of training in college is much higher."

As for her decision not to seek out traditional recruiting for her sport, Vincent says that she knew all along that she would find a way to run one way or another.

"It was always on the radar for me," she said. "I knew I wanted to keep running. Especially at my high school, there were always kids who knew that they wanted to stick with the sport, whether at the varsity level or in some kind of club or intramural program."

As a glaring exception to the trend of fewer Vermont athletes on Middlebury's rosters, Vincent proves that it is still possible for a highly motivated high-school athlete from the state to find success in collegiate athletics.

GREEN MOUNTAIN PRIDE

If there is one hope for future Vermont athletes, it is that a nearly unanimous sentiment exists that having Vermonters playing, and playing well, in a Middlebury uniform is good for all involved.

"Middlebury itself would say that they'd like to see more students here from the state," Ritter said, "and I think they've always looked to do that. I think, from an athletic standpoint, we'd say the same thing."

For the Vermont athletes who do have the opportunity to compete here at Middlebury, the sense of pride is deeply felt.

"It's always nice seeing other Vermonters at Middlebury," St. Amour said.

"If we're Vermonters and we get to go here, we are lucky," Gilbert told me.

And yet so few Vermonters end up playing varsity sports at Middlebury.

The problem is that the fix must come from the ground up. The burden is not on college coaches to recruit lower-quality athletes because they come from in-state, but on the state's youth and high school athletic programs to provide a better product, and on the state as a whole to stop the emigration of its people.



